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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/771,917	02/04/2004	Harald Schlag	8540G-000216	3490
27572	7590	11/28/2006	EXAMINER	
HARNESS, DICKEY & PIERCE, P.L.C. P.O. BOX 828 BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MI 48303			CHU, HELEN OK	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	

DATE MAILED: 11/28/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b>	<b>Applicant(s)</b>	
	10/771,917	SCHLAG, HARALD	
	<b>Examiner</b>	<b>Art Unit</b>	
	Helen O. Chu	1745	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 February 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 15-24 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 and 25-38 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 04 February 2004 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)            | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)   | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                      |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>2/4/2004</u> .  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Election/Restrictions*

1. Restriction to one of the following inventions is required under 35 U.S.C. 121:
  - I. Claims 1-14, 25-38, drawn to a fuel cell system , classified in class 429, subclass 35.
  - II. Claim 15-24, drawn to a method of assembling a fuel cell, classified in class 429, subclass 12.

The inventions are distinct, each from the other because of the following reasons:

2. Inventions II and I are related as process of making and product made. The inventions are distinct if either or both of the following can be shown: (1) that the process as claimed can be used to make another and materially different product or (2) that the product as claimed can be made by another and materially different process (MPEP § 806.05(f)). In the instant case the product as claimed can be made by another and materially different process. Specifically, the process as claimed does not a fuel cell with flow channels on a plate. Because these inventions are independent or distinct for the reasons given above and there would be a serious burden on the examiner if restriction were not required because the inventions require a different field of search (see MPEP § 808.02), restriction for examination purposes as indicated is proper.
3. During a telephone conversation with David McClaughry on November 17 2006 a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of Group I

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drawn to a fuel cell system, claims 1-14, 25-38. Affirmation of this election must be made by applicant in replying to this Office action. Claims 15-24 are withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103***

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-14 and 25-38, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Schmid et al. (US Patent 6,495,278 B1).

6. In regard to claims 1, 7, 13, 25, 31, the Schmid et al. reference discloses an electrically series connected (Column 4, Line 59) MEA fuel cell with a PEM Interposed between two electrode layers with electrocatalyst interface adjacent to the PEM layer (Column 1, Lines 32-34). Each electrode has a provision of a mesh or porous fluid flow layer (Applicants' diffusion layer and also part of the MEA described by the Schmid et al. reference) between separator plates with flow channels (Column 1, Lines 60-62;

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Figure 3a, Components 20 and 21) and the corresponding electrodes (Column 1, Lines 55-58). An inherent trait of a fuel cell is one electrode has to be a cathode and the other is an anode; the channels of the separator plate in the Schmid et al. reference provides the corresponding oxidant and fuel respectively. The Schmid et al. reference discloses the MEA can be adhesively bonded to the entire contacting surface of separator plate (Column 5, Lines 5-8).

In regard to claims 2-4, 8-10, 26-28, 32-34, the Schmidt et al. reference discloses an adhesive that can be an epoxy, electrically conductive or electrically insulating (Column 5, Lines 37-39 and 53).

In regard to claims 5, 11, 29, 35, the Schmid et al. reference illustrates the MEA in contact with a series of lands on the separator plate (Figure 3a). These lands are provided on the anode and cathode side of the MEA.

In regard to claims 14 and 38, the Schmid et al. reference discloses cooling spaces in the form as grooves on the surfaces of the separator plates are for coolant streams.

It is noted that claims 6, 12, 30, 36, are product-by-process claims. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F. 2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985). Since the fuel cell

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system of the Schmid et al. reference is equivalent to that of the Applicant's, Applicant's process is not given patentable weight in this claim.

### ***Conclusion***

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Helen O. Chu whose telephone number is (571) 272-5162. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached on (571) 272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

HOC

  
TRACY DOVE  
PRIMARY EXAMINER